



IMPORT GRADING

1. Purpose

This Procedure defines Quality Assessment Division (QAD) procedures for grading imported meat.

2. Policy

Exemptions to the regulations are reviewed by the Deputy Administrator, and approved when it is determined that providing service would facilitate the marketing, distribution, processing, or utilization of agricultural products through commercial channels.

3. References

The following documents are used for the application of this Procedure. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

[7 CFR 54: Meats, Prepared Meats, and Meat Products \(Grading, Certification and Standards\)](#)

[U.S. Standards for Grade of Carcass Beef](#)

[U.S. Standards for Grades of Veal and Calf Carcasses](#)

[U.S. Standards for Grades of Lamb, Yearling Mutton, and Mutton Carcasses](#)

[QAD 106 Procedure: Grading Exemptions](#)

[QAD 500 Procedure: Beef, Bullock, and Bull Grading Methods and Procedures](#)

[QAD 501 Procedure: Lamb, Yearling Mutton, and Mutton Grading Methods and Procedures](#)

[QAD 502 Procedure: Veal and Calf Grading Methods and Procedures](#)

4. Request an Exemption

- 4.1 Applicants must request and obtain an exemption to the applicable section(s) within 7 CFR part 54 regulation. For example, [Section 54.13\(b\)](#) of the AMS regulations, which states: "Meat of all eligible species shall be graded only in the establishments where the animal was slaughtered or initially chilled..."

NOTE: Canada, which has a "blanket exemption" to grade imported beef carcasses, sides, or quarters. ([See QAD 106 Procedure: Grading Exemptions](#)).

- 4.2 The Deputy Administrator approves exemption requests.
- 4.3 Identify quarters so that hindquarters can be matched to forequarters and presented as carcasses or sides. (See 6.5 below for instructions for imported ribs and loins.)
- 4.4 Applicants must notify the USDA grader that imported products are being presented for grading.



5. Required Marks on Meat of Foreign Origin

- 5.1 To be eligible for grading, imported meat must be marked as prescribed in [Section 54.5](#) of the AMS regulations. Additionally, when imported meat is presented for grading, applicants must apply for and obtain an exemption to the imprinting requirements [Section 54.13\(b\)](#) of the AMS regulations, which states: "Meat of all eligible species shall be graded only in the establishment where the animal was slaughtered or initially chilled..."
- 5.2 Imported product(s) must bear the appropriate inspection stamps or legends, or other approved method for identifying country of origin prior to performing any grading or certification service.
- 5.3 Certified meat previously exported to a foreign country which is reentering the United States, as well as uncertified imported meat, is eligible for meat grading and/or certification services only when admitted and accepted into the United States by inspectors employed by FSIS.
- 5.4 The QAD Director is authorized to approve marks of foreign origin which meet the criteria set forth in [Section 54.5](#) of the AMS regulations. Files of these marks are to be retained on AGNIS in the [Meat Plant Data files](#).
- 5.5 Meat graders who have questions regarding the grading of imported meat or suspect that carcasses offered for grading may be of foreign origin, although not represented as such by the applicant, will contact their supervisor before applying any grade marks.

6. Requirements for Grading Imported Ribs and Loins

- 6.1 [IMPS](#) 103 and 103A; beef ribs and IMPS 172, 172A, 173, and 174; beef loins may be offered for grading providing they are tagged as matched sets originating from one carcass. The chine bone must be intact on all pieces and shall be tinged with red color. The lean shall be slightly light red to light red in color and a minimum of slightly firm. The grade shall be determined from any one of the four pieces (rib or loin) having the highest degree of marbling. This resulting grade shall be assigned to all matched pieces.
- 6.2 Beef must be derived from steers and heifers; the slaughtering facility must have a segregation program to ensure only steers and heifers are presented for grading. The slaughter facility must agree to periodic in-plant reviews of this process.
- 6.3 Beef loins must have some evidence of cartilage present on the end of at least one lumbar vertebra to qualify for USDA Select, Choice, or Prime grades.
- 6.4 Beef ribs may have no more than partial ossification on the ends of any thoracic vertebra to qualify for USDA Choice, or Prime grades or no more than some evidence of ossification on the ends of any thoracic vertebra to qualify for USDA Select.
- 6.5 These cuts are not eligible for yield grading.
- 6.6 It is suggested that cuts be identified with numbered tags (identical numbers of each set of ribs and loins) indicating date of slaughter be covered with ribeye paper to prevent dehydration, stacked in plastic lined and covered combo bins, and be between



temperatures of 28 and 40 degrees F during transport from the importing country to the US for grading. If product is brought in vacuum packaged bags, the product must be removed from the bags for at least 30 minutes to allow the product to bloom before offering the cuts to the grader. If the identification (numbered tags) that match the ribs and the loins are inside the vacuum packaged bags, these cuts should not be removed from the bags until the grader is present.

- 6.7 If these cuts are going into grade label bags at the same facility we are grading, pop stamps would be sufficient for grade identification. However, if these cuts are not going into grade label bags, these cuts should be roller branded or identified through another approved manner. It can be an abbreviated roller brand.
- 6.8 Cuts should be presented on hanging hooks or tables for ease in age determination and ribeye or loin eye evaluation; in a minimum 100 candle power lighted cooler.

7. Change of Record

- 7.1 Policy and References section added.
- 7.2 Requirements for Grading Ribs and Loins section added.
- 7.3 QAD Director is authorized to approve marks of foreign origin.
- 7.4 Files will be maintained on AGNIS.
- 7.5 Incorporates items from QAD 102: *Required Marks of Inspection and/or Foreign Origin*

8. Supersedes

- 8.1 QAD 102 Procedure: *Required Marks of Inspection and/or Foreign Origin*; November 29, 2011.
- 8.2 QAD 504 Procedure: *Import Grading*; February 9, 2015.

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